

Mayor's Blue-Ribbon Task Force on Tenant Displacement

Monthly Meeting Tuesday, April 23, 2019, 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. Sullivan Chamber, City Hall 795 Massachusetts Ave, Cambridge MA 02139

MEETING MINUTES

The *Mayor's Blue-Ribbon Task Force on Tenant Displacement* convened for a regular meeting on Tuesday, April 23, 2019, in the Sullivan Chamber at City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Ave, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Councillor Sumbul Siddiqui, Chair of the Task Force, called the meeting to order at 5:42 pm with seven members present at the meeting's start. In attendance as presenters were Chris Cotter and Cliff Cook. Present as members of the public were Ellen Semonoff, Maria Melo, and Bailey Werner.

Task Force Members in Attendance: Councillor Sumbul Siddiqui, Chair		Task Force Members Absent:	City of Cambridge Staff in Attendance:	City of Cambridge Staff Absent:
Sonia Andujar Jessica Drew Betsy Eichel Iram Farooq Larry Field	Beth Huang Alexandra Markiewicz Maura Pensak (arrived before 6:00 pm)	Patrick Barrett Teresa Cardosi Sean Hope Kuong Lee Maura Pensak Cheryl-Ann Pizza-Zeoli	Sarah Stillman	Wilford Durbin

ITEM	DISCUSSION	ACTION	RESPONSIBLE
Call to Order	The meeting was called to order at 5:42 pm by Sumbul Siddiqui, Chair.	Procedural	Sumbul Siddiqui
Overview of Meeting Agenda	An overview of the agenda for the meeting was given by Sumbul Siddiqui, Chair.	Informational	Sumbul Siddiqui

Presentation by Cliff Cook, Planning Information Manager, CDD, and Chris Cotter, Housing	Chair Siddiqui introduced Mr. Cliff Cook, Planning Information Manager, and Mr. Chris Cotter, Housing Director, both members of the City's Community Development Department (CDD) staff, who presented the CDD's data analysis of eviction complaints in Cambridge. [See attached slide presentation.]	Informational	Chris Cotter; Cliff Cook
Director, CDD	 Half the complaints are filed against people who have been through the process at least once already, sometimes multiple times. February and April are lowest months for complaints, a striking difference. Noted drop off in 2015-17 when the great recession hit home in 2011, but by 2013 economy was getting better. Housing court comes in to play in 2018 - small number of filings in housing court vs district (which court you file in may depend on what your desired outcome is) Judgements under 500 dollars are generally only for court costs. East Cambridge has high number of market rate evictions (noted example of particular building with a particular policy) Black Box: this is as far as CDD can get with the data gathered, not knowing as much about eviction complaints as we do with foreclosures. We have more info than we've ever had on eviction complaints in Cambridge, but the challenge is knowing if what we've gathered is accurate with the case files (just because a complaint is filed does not mean someone is evicted); where are the points of action? Intern will fact check and dig deeper into the data we're gathering; look at sample of case files from beginning to end in the two courts to survey what actions and outcomes we have in the city. CDD is hoping to put all of this in to an annual report and update this periodically. The data may not show the full picture; having an eviction filing on your record will impede your ability to move forward with housing etc. The Task Force members asked questions regarding the data presented, and a discussion followed, including input from Ms. Ellen Semonoff and Ms. Maria Melo of the City's Department of Human Services. Chair Siddiqui thanked the presenters for providing this update and for the data presented. 		ALL
Updates & Announcements	Chair Siddiqui provided an update on the status of the hiring process for City's Housing Liaison position: • After a sizable first round of applicants, unfortunately the City has not yet completed its search and the job has now been reposted. Ideally looking for someone with CAE management experience and solid understanding of the issues,	Informational	Sumbul Siddiqui

	 a very strong collaborator, and with broad enough experience to both properly address policy issues and deal with emergency situations. The person who steps in to this role will need to understand what's happening and do some best-fit work between all the departments that touch on housing. Chair Siddiqui said that she will share the description with the Task Force. 	Action	Sumbul Siddiqui
	Chair Siddiqui requested Mr. Cotter share the City's plan for its upcoming "2019 Affordable Housing Action Week of Action": • This year, the CDD decided to shift to a month of events as opposed to one week in May - starting this Saturday, April 27 th , with the "Affordable Housing Fair" at the Community Arts Center on Windsor St, 11:00 am - 2:30 pm. This is also in celebration of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust.	Informational	Chris Cotter
	 Chair Siddiqui said that she will share out the calendar of events for the "2019 Affordable Housing Action Month of Action." 	Action	Sumbul Siddiqui
Updates from Task Force Action Area Working Groups	Chair Siddiqui introduced the following Task Force Working groups—Tenant Education Legislative and Policy Agenda and Funding—to provide progress updates to the Task Force at large and present any pending questions or needs.	Informational	Sumbul Siddiqui
	 Tenant Education Working Group Plan for a series of workshops on different topics is laid out (resources for tenants, familiarity with fair housing laws, preparing for inspections, etc) Main question: would this plan be led by Task Force, or would it be passed off to someone from City to implement and institutionalize? Chair Siddiqui confirmed the latter (would make sense to have this passed to Liaison once hired). Other ideas discussed: Task Force "Open House" –holding open house to invite residents into space, highlight what we're collecting and the work we're doing on displacement. City of Cambridge ordinance to protect tenants – a "Tenant Organizing Ordinance" – what would this look like for Cambridge, what will be the processis this a home rule situation? Tenant Association / inclusionary tenant advisory group - TBD (Chris Cotter said CDD is looking at coming up with better process for residents to give us input). 	Informational	Alexandra Markiewicz, Sonia Andujar, Maura Pensak

Somerville (just passed an ordinance of Following how Somerville's (what lawsuits and challenge doing an 11/10, what is our Ouestions to investigate: If would they be and what kind	nances passed between 1998 and 2019: Boston, on March 21), and policy considerations ordinance plays out; will get sense of parameters is that may come up, etc); asking, 'if Somerville is 10/10?' we were to propose some recommendations, what of impact could they have? Will there be any effect? to hold a meeting and involve the Assessor's Office;	Informational	Larry Field; Beth Huang; Betsy Eichel Larry Field; Beth Huang; Betsy Eichel; Sean Hope; Sumbul Siddiqui
more effectively. • CASLS providers are dealing manage payments of damage bumping wheelchair)—costs is on SSI; if a tenant owes a threat to their tenancy. • How do we use funding spectors. • Increasing rental assistance of	funding resources available and use those we have g with recurring issues of how to source/ cause- (e.g. tenant with a disability damages apt with of these can be significant, especially when a tenant andlord thousands of dollars and can't pay it, that is a ifically geared to damages? ap? What is outcome we are expecting? out in request to the City Manager.	Informational Action	Jessica Drew; Betsy Eichel
are looking for funding for (versus justice) Reaching out to organization quality of life in city and may association, Science Cares); things. Could write a letter of interest Options might include: Vouchers for getting people	s in Cambridge that give lip-service to improving whave funding to give (e.g. Kendall Square major institutions provide funding for a variety of st to inquire, and/or set up a meeting to discuss.	Action	Sumbul Siddiqui

Action Area Working Group Break Out	Chair Siddiqui thanked all the Task Force members for their updates and announced that for the last 15-20 minutes of the meeting the Task Force would break out in to these Working Groups and discuss next action steps. Chair Siddiqui and her legislative aide, Ms. Sarah Stillman, met with each of the groups during this time.	Action	ALL
Adjournment	Chair Siddiqui adjourned the meeting at 7:40 pm.	Procedural	Sumbul Siddiqui